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ABSTRACT

An investigation of interdisciplinary sources dealing with social values and the college curriculum reveals numerous examples of a "double-bind" situation, in which mutually contradictory signals are transmitted to the student. One example is the discrepancy between the stated purposes of the community college, as contained in its catalog and overt curriculum, and the covert curriculum, with its attendant values, that the student actually experiences. Although community colleges have accepted the traditional philosophy of "value-free," objective education, charges were made during the 1960's that colleges and universities had abandoned neutral positions on controversial issues--students began to articulate the discrepancies between the overt and hidden curricula and descry conflicting values in education. In and out of the classroom, consciously and unconsciously, values are transmitted through moralizing, modeling, laissez-faire attitudes, and values-clarification techniques. Studies have indicated that the attitudes and personalities of teachers have more influence on students than the subject matter taught. Unfortunately, studies of the community college instructor have revealed that their attitudes toward the educationally disadvantaged student are somewhat negative, and that middle class values are deeply entrenched in the institution as a whole. Numerous obstacles impinge on the possible resolution of the problems of the impact of values on the curriculum. (DR)

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THE IMPACT OF VALUES ON THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE CURRICULUM: A STATE OF DOUBLE-BIND

By

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INTRODUCTION

The community college system has been on the American scene for approximately seventy-five years. (Monroe, 1972, p. 3) The concept of the community college began as an extension of the free public high school, and in many ways has tried not to emulate the four year institutions of higher education. Its stated aim was, and still is, to serve people in the community regardless of how individuals had previously performed academically. The new institutions did not develop in a vacuum, and therefore can be described as a "mutation" of the high schools or a hybrid between the high schools and universities. The community colleges contain remnants from the parent institutions, both in courses offered and in philosophy. Community interests and services have been addressed through off-campus, non credit and community service courses.

The fact that community colleges as new institutions of the 20th century are surviving seems to indicate that: 1) They must be satisfying the needs of individuals in the community; 2) They have politically strong support groups; 3) They are consistent with the values of the parent institutions, the individuals whose needs are being satisfied as well as those who are willing to support them financially. "In the long run, every public college if it is to continue to receive financial support, must reflect the dominant attitudes and policies of those who control and finance it."[1] (Monroe, 1972, p. 50)

When the values which support the community college concept are examined, Jencks and Riesman (1968) state that the community colleges have, "capitalized on the local backlash against national institutions and cosmopolitan values; on lower middle and working class resentment against professional exclusiveness and social snobbery at the universities."[2] (p. 482) There seems to be certain contradictions between the above quote and the fact that in most community colleges, the emphasis is on the transfer curriculum and that most instructors prefer to teach the transfer students. (Jencks and Riesman, 1968, p. 487)

It would appear that the community college student is left in somewhat of a quandry as a result of receiving double messages. The overt message (transmitted through syllabi, college catelogs, stated goals, etc.) is that all are worthy of being educated, and anyone who wishes to attend college has the opportunity to do so. Those students not in college transfer receive a covert and simultaneous conflicting message (transmitted through texts, what is included and excluded from courses, instructors' attitudes and values, society's view of the community college student, etc.) which seems to indicate that those most worthy of educating are in college transfer and that the community college is not "really college."

Bateson (1958) originally conceptualized the double-bind theory. This theory delineates a type of interaction "in which one person demands a response to a message containing mutually contradictory signals while the other is unable either to comment on the incongruity or to escape from the situation."[3] (American Psychiatric Association, 1975, p. 45) This paper will examine the overt and covert messages received by community college students through the curriculum and the role (if any) values play in the double-bind phenomenon.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The major question under consideration is whether a hidden curriculum exists in the community college, what is its nature, and what conditions result from any value conflicts between the overt and covert curriculums.

Since values and curriculum are crucial concepts in this paper, a brief definition of each is in order. A value is "a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable, which influences the selection from available modes and ends of action."[4] (Kluckhohn, 1951, p. 389) Values then, are overt or covert beliefs of what is desirable or "good." Curriculum has been defined as, "the objectives and functions of the institution into a system of formally organized learning experiences for guiding the learner and the teacher."[5] (Monroe, 1972, p. 46)

EXPLORATION OF THE ISSUE

Jane Martin (1976) in her article, "What Should We Do With a Hidden Curriculum When We Find One?" speaks of the hidden curriculum as being that which is intended that students learn, and what has not been openly intended that they do in fact learn. An example cited is when students don't learn to read or learn math or science. Instead what they learn is to "be docile and obedient to value competition over cooperation to stifle their creative impulses.."[6] (p. 136) Martin believes that very often curriculums openly aim at nonacademic learning such as moral values, political views and vocational skills.

The emphasis on vocational skills in the community colleges are part of the overt curriculum, but even with this upfront attitude, Jencks and Riesman (1968) state,

> "The job to which a junior college graduate initially aspires often requires specialized skill and intelligence. This means that when a dull student is counseled into a technical training program he often finds this just as difficult as the largely rote academic program from which he came. In addition, everyone believes [covert value] that vocational training leads to less lucrative or at least, less prestigious jobs than the transfer program. The transfer program therefore ranks higher in the eyes of the students than do technical programs. [covert message] When advised to transfer to the technical programs [overt message] the community college students usually conclude (often rightly) [covert contradictory message] that they are really being advised to withdraw and they often take the advice."[7] (p.489) (UNDERLINING AND BRACKETED COMMENTS ADDED.)

Even when the curriculum seems to be in plain view, (catalogs, college goals and aims, etc.) a hidden curriculum with values which conflict with the open curriculum can very often leave the student in a state of double-bind. One way for the student to escape this psychologically damaging situation is to drop out.

Charles Monroe (1972) devotes a chapter to the "Dropout Problem." (pp. 207-215) In this chapter many studies are reviewed which have looked at college dropouts. The focus is almost totally on the student. Motivation, finances, intellectual ability, family,

peer influences and psychiatric disorders have been studied as factors which influence students to drop out. Only in one study, the college environment was identified as the causal factor. Monroe (1972) feels that the community college must assume some responsibility for motivating students to succeed. In other words, it is not just personal deficiencies that cause a student to drop out. "A student should have the freedom and opportunity to choose from several avenues or programs of study. The counseling department has a major responsibility in matching students interests and abilities with the curriculum."[8] (Monroe, 1972, p. 215) These avenues and programs are expressed through the overt curriculum. It is interesting that Monroe (1972) concludes by writing, "the student must be encouraged to believe that all choices are worthwhile and socially approved."[9] (p. 215) Is there a hint of an existing hidden curriculum with alternate values and messages which are transmitted to the students through individuals and the curriculum itself?

There is another side to this issue. Educators have strongly stated that values do not and should not enter into the classroom through the formal curriculum. "Many faculty members deny that they teach values or elicit a value defined outlook on life."[10] (Keeton, 1972, p. 146) In this view, there is no room for a hidden curriculum since what would be taught would be "objective" and "scientific." "In theory, a democratic college should pursue a course of political neutrality and complete objectivity dedicated solely to the search for truth and knowledge."[11] (Monroe, 1972, p. 50)

Brubacker and Rudy (1976) devote a section of their book to "value-free" higher education. They provide historical understanding for two important characteristics that American universities adopted from the German university at the end of the 19th century. They state,

> "truth must be value free (Wertfreiheit), that is, disinterested, unaffected by the personal values of the investigator. The elimination of personal bias, which has always been notoriously variable, gave truth and objectivity that commanded general if not universal acceptance. On the other hand, since only experts in assaying truth are sufficient

> judges of truth, the faculty must enjoy autonomy in determining it. Neither political nor ecclesiastical authorities should interfere."[12] (p. 304)

One of the major philosophies of American higher education thus became firmly entrenched and passed on to each succeeding generation of college professors, as well as high school and elementary school teachers. The community colleges accepted the value-free philosophy but had less emphasis placed on the autonomy of the professor. (Monroe, 1972, pp. 254-55) The student disturbances of the 1960's, addressed the universities neutral stance on the issues of the day. Some faculty agreed that the university should give up its value-free position, while many others reasserted the value-free philosophy and non-political role. The students in essence, were able to articulate the discrepancies between the overt and hidden curriculum. Although the universities cried, "objectivity," they were heavily financed by government and industry. "In serving social values, the university abandoned neutrality or controversial issues and thus endangered not only its claim to objectivity and truth, but its claim to autonomy. Truth was no longer clearly value free."[13] (Brubacker and Rudy, 1975, p. 305) Yet, Werdell (1974) says, "The formal curriculum continues to be based solely on a search for increasingly abstract truth. A problem is solved when the 'true,' correct or reasonable answer is discovered and verified."[14] (p. 284)

MODELS OF TRANSMITTING VALUES

In the past, parents, teachers and religious institutions took a common approach toward helping children develop values. This approach is best known as moralizing. "Moralizing is the direct or indirect transfer of a set of values from one person or group to another."[15] (Kerschenbaum and Simon, 1974, p. 258) There was little disagreement between parents and teachers on what values should be taught.

Today, children and adults are being faced with contradictory sets of values. Teachers may have different values from the parents as well as with each other.

Organized religions offer still another set of moralizations. Of course, the media (radio, T.V., newspapers, records) bombards people with what to believe, how to behave and dress, how to think and act if one wants to be successful. (There has yet to be a T.V. commercial that shows a man or woman going to the community college and getting the dream man/woman rushing towards them in slow motion!)

A second model involves the teachers adopting a laissez-faire attitude towards values. They decide to let students go their own way, to make their own mistakes and discoveries. "By proclaiming that neutrality on the institutional level is glorious, even in the face of great social evils, they lend credence to the notion that human beings can be neutral, detached, and value-free without harming society as a whole. In a society which systematically evades its social responsibilities, the existence of important institutions which are neutral merely encourages individuals to be neutral which usually means ignoring the problems."[16] (Callahan, 1971, p. 15)

A third approach to transmitting values is called modeling. "Teachers need to sacrifice some of their neutrality and objectivity and become real human beings to the students -- with goals, values and contradictions..."[17] (Kirschenbaum and Simon, p. 262) This approach poses a problem. There are so many models that it becomes difficult for the student to select out those things he/she wishes to emulate.

A more recent approach has been developed by those involved in humanistic education. They are attempting to teach the interpersonal and intrapersonal skills which young people will need to deal with value conflicts and decisions. This model is called Values Clarification.

By the time the community college student goes to college, he/she has been exposed to family, schools and teachers (moralizing, modeling) the mass media, religion, peer groups, and to making value decisions. What further impact can the

curriculum have on student values?

TEACHERS ROLE IN TRANSMITTING VALUES THROUGH THE CURRICULUM

Albert Oliver (1971) believes that no matter what appears in a textbook, or in a course outline, the personality of the teacher is a major influence in determining the outcome of the learning process. Monroe (1972) supports this view when he writes, "the most effective influences on a student may be the impact of the teacher's personality, his attitudes and his ability to arouse interest and not the content in his course."[18] (p. 47) Since the teacher's personality and attitudes seems to have some influence on students, Hagen (1973) surveyed seven hundred community college faculty members in order to determine their attitudes toward academically disadvantaged students. Hagen found that those who held more favorable attitudes were females who came from lower class, pre-college socioeconomic backgrounds. They also held less than a bachelors degree, had less than one year of community college teaching experience, consider their major teaching assignment to be courses for general education students and were willing to participate in inservice training which focused on problems in teaching disadvantaged students. (p. 414)

What is the general agreement in the literature about community college teachers? Monroe (1972) says that the curriculum of community colleges reflect the values and beliefs of the middle class. Some of these values include The Puritan Ethic, morality, sobriety, hard work, thrift, material values and capitalism. The curriculum in the community college "rests upon the foundation of middle class interests and values."[14] (Monroe, 1972, p. 52) Not only is the curriculum entrenched in middle class values, but most faculty members come from the middle class and are sympathetic to middle class values and the established social system. Those who have the most favorable views of the least capable college students are not the same as those who actually teach on the faculty. Since the teachers attitudes and values play a major role in the learning process, a connection again can be made for the community college students being placed in a double-bind.

It would seem reasonable to assume that the developmentally disadvantaged students would need a great deal of positive reinforcement and positive strokes (in Transactional Analysis terms) in order to boost their already low self images. Again, the overt curriculum provides specialized courses, learning machines and individualized attention which conveys one message, while the attitudes and values of the faculty conveys another.

CONSTRAINTS ACTING UPON POSSIBLE RESOLUTIONS

There are several factors which impinge upon the possible resolution of the impact of values on the community college curriculum. Martin (1976) puts forth the predominant obstacle to any possibility of ridding the educational system from future hidden curricula. She states, "as new practices, procedures, environments and the like are introduced into educational settings, they become potential generators of hidden curricula."[20] (p. 140) She feels it is a mistake to believe that when reforms are instituted, the hidden curriculum will disappear. Even enlightened practices can have undesirable hidden curriculums.

The controversy between those who think values belong on the college campus versus those who do not persists (Carnegie Commission, 1977, p. 250) and its end is not in sight. The Carnegie Commission (1977) took a position on the values issue. They believe that, "What is needed now is for colleges and universities not only to appreciate the extent of the influence they inevitably exert on the value orientation of youth, but also to accept responsibility for consciously incorporating that influence into their educational endeavors."[21] (p. 250)

The radical school reformers (Bereiter, Kozol, Holt, Gross) feel that schools should not be in the business of forming attitudes and values. They basically feel that in order to get rid of the hidden curriculums, the "setting" or "institution" (schools) must be abolished in their present state.

Peterson and Park (1975) support the view that young people are given mixed messages both in and out of school. "Schooling imposes an artificial zone between

childhood and adulthood. Adolescents are told not to act like children, but they are not permitted to function as adults. They are told to be responsible but are not given real responsibilities."[22] (p. 622) The authors feel that education is value-ladden and unexamined values are often brought into the classroom. They stress that career education may be a way to reduce the discontinuity in this country's educational efforts. Their own values are made explicit in the article when they say that society needs to shift its focus from industrial values toward more humanistic values.

Arthur Cohen, in his book, Dateline '79: Heretical Concepts for the Community College (1969) presents nine myths which exist in the community college. The eighth myth is concerned with the existence of value free instruction. If one follows through with his arguments it would be reasonable to conclude that the community college student is not exposed to a value-free curriculum and in fact can easily be placed in a double-bind situation. For example, Cohen writes, "The "tracking" system which groups students into "remedial" sections where they have a better chance to "succeed" suggests prejudgment."[23] (p. 82) The mere fact that the selection process into remedial courses occurs, gives some indication of potentially conflicting implicit and explicit values and messages which operate simultaneously. What can the students do who again are caught in a double bind situation?

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to explore a particular problem and not to provide solutions. The problem is complex, and much thought and research would have to be carried out in order to provide realistic solutions. The important point is that the "fact-value" dilemma has historical roots in the American higher education system. The community college students of the future will be faced with potentially new double-bind situations unless there is some movement towards the elimination of undesirable hidden curriculums.

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